

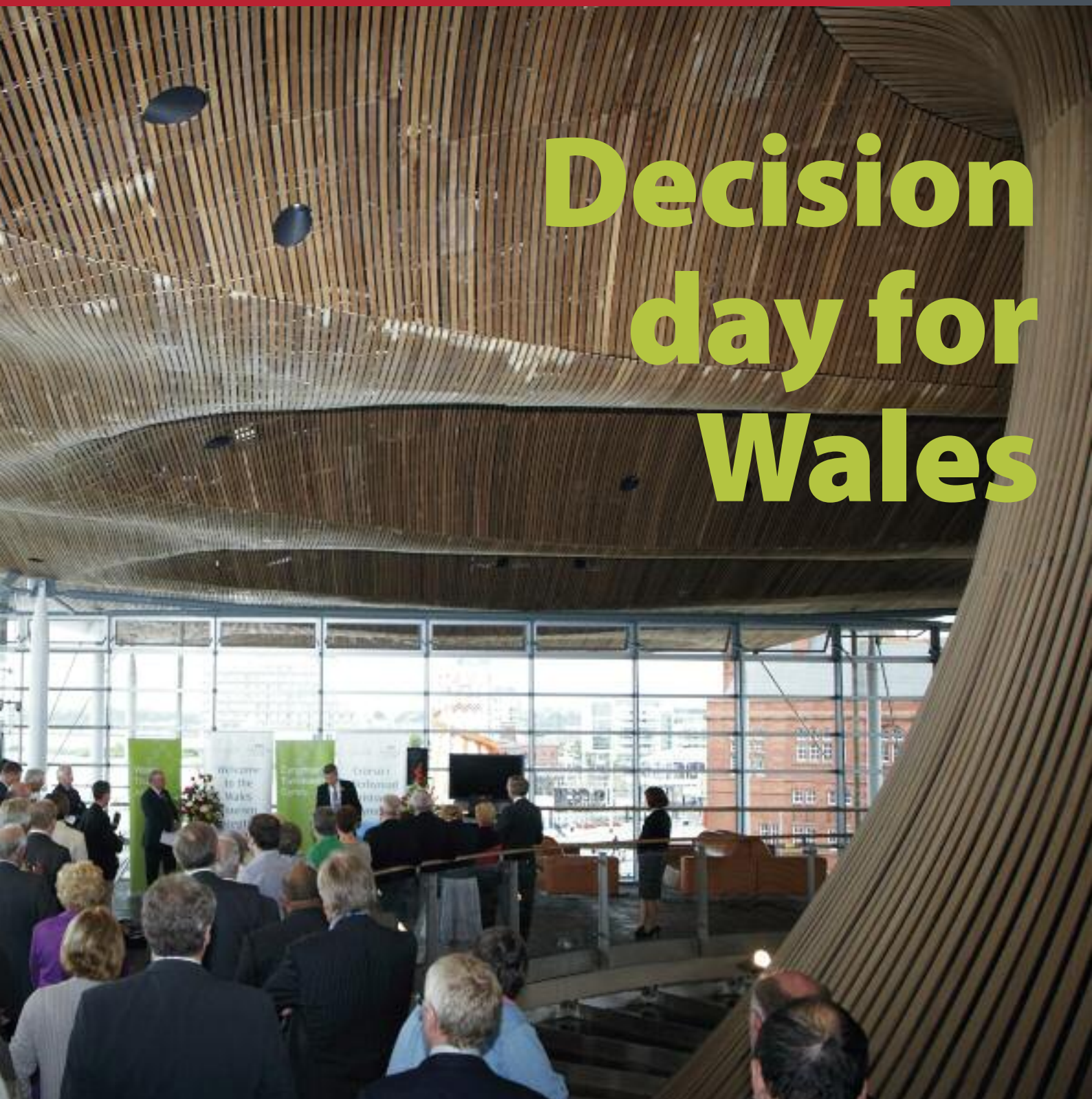


ASLEF

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN

JOURNAL
FEBRUARY 2011

Decision day for Wales



14 **Fair Fares:** Campaign for fairer train tickets

11 **Rail suicides:** Prevention group starts work

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News? You couldn't make it up!

MEMBERS may have noticed 'reports' in the press last month that ASLEF members working on London Underground are going on strike on 29 April, the day of the royal wedding. That was the news. Well, I'll let you into a secret. It was news to me as well.

The 'story' began when one of our representatives spoke to a journalist about Bank Holiday payments, rather irresponsibly adding that the date of the royal wedding was 'not ruled out'.

To a journalist, this was enough to merit the banner headline 'ASLEF TO STRIKE ON ROYAL WEDDING DAY'.

Suddenly we were in the middle of a media frenzy. Literally, questions were asked in the House. The Prime Minister was quoted, the Leader of the Labour Party was grilled. Head Office was inundated with queries from news agencies from across the world, with America to the fore. Requests for interviews piled high as the less balanced members of the public bombarded us with frantic insults and obscene messages. Mayor Boris sprang to propose driverless Tube trains.

All this was despite the fact that hours after the original distortion appeared on the news wires, I had authorised an official statement which was circulated and posted on our web site saying three things quite clearly: that the question of possible industrial action on the day of the Royal Wedding had not been discussed by the union's executive; negotiations about Bank Holiday payments were due to resume; and the newspaper story, to say the least, was 'premature'.

That should have sorted it out. But it didn't. The media chose to ignore the union statement. Instead they built it up. It was quite bizarre. The media usually spreads its ink demanding that we withdraw a strike threat. Suddenly they were insisting we stuck by one that we had never announced.

You couldn't make it up. Unless you're a journalist, that is.

Keith Norman
General Secretary



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ABOUT **ASLEF**

Aslef Journal published monthly by ASLEF

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ASLEF JOURNAL | EDITOR Keith Norman | PRINTED BY TU ink, London EC2A 4QS | GRAPHIC DESIGN Michael Cronin
ADVERTISING Ten Alps Media, 1 New Oxford Street, High Holborn, London, W.C1A. 1N.U. | **ADVERTISING CONTACTS** Contact
matthew.reilly@tenalps.com Tel: 020 7878 2361 (display) or joe.brooks@tenalps.com Tel: 020 7657 1801 (classified)

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**More than
just a union**

Tube bosses given green light for spending spree as stations suffer cuts

ASLEF is appalled by news that Underground bosses plan to spend cash saved through £12 m of recent cuts on hotels, drinks, flowers, lunches and management consultants.

In a circular to top tube bosses, Boris Johnson's Transport Commissioner, Peter Hendy, tells managers that they have now got a green light to spend money on a wide range of luxuries just at the time that the union has exposed plans to leave a third of tube stations unstaffed, at the same time that station security alerts have been upgraded to severe.

The items on Peter Hendy's tube manager's shopping list include

- Lunches or refreshments
- Hotel accommodation
- First class post

● Management Consultancy Contracts

● Personal headed paper, compliment slips and business cards

● Newspapers and periodicals

● Flowers and Greetings Cards

An ASLEF statement read:

'Just at the point that London Transport is put on a severe terror alert, and staff who deal with emergencies are being hacked back leaving stations unstaffed, Boris Johnson's transport chief has given the green light to a spending spree on luxuries and hospitality that will create a tidal wave of anger.

'While tube fares are being jacked up by nearly 7%, and safety-critical staff are being hacked to the bone, the top



bosses are being allowed to rack up millions of pounds of spending on hotels, flowers, hospitality and consultants. It's nothing short of scandalous.

Keith Norman said the whole

episode was reminiscent of the banking scandal. 'It reeks of people at the top telling everyone else to tighten their belts while management perks and bonuses escalate.'

Tory pension plans 'wolves in sheep's clothing'

THE General Secretary has condemned government pension plans as 'wolves in sheep's clothing', saying that the restoration of the link between earnings and the state pension is by no means what it seems.

'While this seems to be a progressive move that should be welcomed, its benefits are practically negated by the shift from using the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the much lower Consumer Price Index (CPI) in occupational schemes,' Keith Norman said.

The effect will already reduce the value of occupational pensions across all sectors. KPMG, a leading audit, tax and advisory body, says it could reduce UK private sector pension liabilities by 10% - or about £100bn. It also warns that the changes will have a cumulative affect and could lead to some pensioners receiving up to 25% less pension in their final years.

The Conservative Party's own research in February 2009 demonstrated that pensioner inflation was far higher even than the Retail Price Index. At the time RPI was 0.1% but the Conservatives calculated that 'pensioner inflation' was as high as 8.6% for single pensioners and 6.7% for couples.

'Apart from any moral considerations, attacking occupational pensions is counter productive to the taxpayer who will simply end up paying for benefits for pensioners should they not be able to pay for a basic standard of living from their own provision,' Keith added.

The union is calling for a cross union campaign to highlight the particular problems pensioners will face in light of the government's cuts agenda and a 'vigorous and constant' lobby to make the government reconsider its plans.



BORIS JOHNSON used his State of London speech to make vague threats about a driverless tube network. This was in the furore of the 'royal wedding strike' stories.

Boris declared, 'Technology will soon be available for tubes to be driven automatically,' claiming that any of his evening-dressed Mansion House audience could supervise an Underground train after a couple of weeks' training.

Keith Norman dismissed the claim as 'uninformed hot air'. 'No one in their right mind wants to entrust their lives to computerised systems with no one at the front to react in case of a failure,' Keith said. 'How many people have never experienced a computer crashing?'



FREIGHT DOWN FOR EUROTUNNEL

Rail freight numbers fell at Eurotunnel last year although its revenues and demand increased. Both truck and coach traffic were up in the same period and care shuttle traffic was up by 11% compared with 2009.

Proposed cuts for Scottish rail freight

THE SNP is facing pressure from Scottish Labour and the Scottish Greens to abandon plans to axe the Freight Facilities Grant following a motion tabled by MSP Cathy Jamieson in the Scottish parliament that aims to protect the Scottish Government's investment in the FFG. Since the introduction of the FFG, which enables freight to move from road to rail, Grants totaling £68.9m have been awarded to projects in Scotland leading to a reduction of more than 33.5m lorry miles per year.

Despite Transport Scotland currently

being in an advanced state of negotiations with a number of current applicants to the fund, the Scottish government proposes to reduce payments to the freight industry from £10.3m in 2010-11 to just £2.9m the following year. There is widespread concern that this will jeopardize ongoing projects such as the Grangestone Railhead scheme in South Ayrshire.

Concern has also been expressed that a return to road freight will not only damage the environment but is likely to have a negative impact on the local economy, particularly



MSP Cathy Jamieson has tabled a motion to save rail Freight Facilities Grants

manufacturing. ASLEF which has campaigned to maintain the FFG says the grants had been a 'huge success', and environment group WWF Scotland said cutting support would increase climate pollution

PROTESTS WON'T STOP HIGH SPEED RAIL LINK, SAYS BIRMINGHAM COUNCIL

THE £18 billion high speed rail line from London to Birmingham will not be derailed by protesters, says Birmingham City Council. Neighbouring local authorities, including Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Coventry have opposed the high speed line from London to Birmingham on environment grounds and fears it 'could damage the economy of other West Midland towns and cities'.

Birmingham council, however, argues that benefits will include creating up to 22,000 jobs in the region and increasing economic output by between £600million and £1.5billion. Councillors also argue that the high-speed line must involve improved rail connectivity within Birmingham city centre, including a metro or rapid transit service linking the high speed rail station at Curzon Street with New Street and Snow Hill.

In a gesture to residents, the government has announced plans to plant 2 million trees along the rail line to separate.

PCS CALL TO UNITE AGAINST CUTS

PUBLIC and Commercial Services union Deputy General Secretary Hugh Lanning addressed the Executive Committee during their December session and gave a thoughtful analysis of the current economic and political situation, with particular reference to the challenges faced by his members in the civil service.

Hugh highlighted the hundreds of thousands of jobs set to be lost in the public sector as a result of the cuts, describing the Coalition's deficit reduction plans as 'the end of the welfare state'.

Hugh emphasised the need for trade unions to demonstrate a viable alternative to the Government's cuts, citing the £120 billion that is lost each year by tax avoidance, and called for unions to build alliances and understanding at local, regional and national level.

Newsinbrief

COSTLY CONSULTANTS

Norman Baker revealed that the latest available figures show that the Department for Transport spent £24,710,000 on consultants from May to October 2010.

PAYMENTS FOR DISPUTES

The Secretary of State for Transport has confirmed that at his discretion 'the Department can reimburse TOCs for net losses incurred as a result of industrial action, provided they can demonstrate they took 'all reasonable steps to avoid industrial action and mitigate its effects'.

UNION CALLS OFF LONDON MIDLAND ACTION AFTER COURT CASE

ASLEF called off proposed industrial action planned for 23 December following the granting of an injunction to London Midland in the High Court. The company challenged the legitimacy of three of the 600-plus ballot papers issued in the industrial relations vote that backed strike action with an 86% majority.

UK HIGH SPEED RAIL

ASLEF attended a conference on 'Sustaining the Momentum on UK high speed rail' where Secretary of State for Transport Philip Hammond said he hoped HS2 would further encourage a modal shift from road to rail, increase capacity and develop more sustainable economic growth. He indicated his hope that the first hybrid bill on the subject of High Speed 2 would receive Royal Assent. The conference heard contributions from a range of speakers including Network Rail, the Northern Way and Bechtel.

TURKEY TO BUILD 100 HST STATIONS

Turkey is to build nearly 100 high-speed train stations to accommodate its new high-speed trains, including three in the capital, Ankara. The country's first high-speed train started operating on the Ankara-Eskisehir route in 2009.

RUSSIAN RUSH TO RAIL

The decision to make Russia hosts of the 2018 World Cup has led to its developing a rail network linking the 13 host cities at a cost of over 4 billion euros.

GULF TO SPEND \$100 BLN ON RAIL

Gulf Arab states are spending more than \$100 billion on rail projects as they tackle poor public transport networks and growing populations. The six oil and gas producers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) will seek to create a similar model to Europe's high-speed rail system, with plans to extend the estimated 1,940 kilometre network to Yemen by 2017.



EUROSTAR REVENUE UP 12%

Eurostar has announced that sales revenue for 2010 is up by 12% compared with 2009, from £675.5m to £760m. They say this is the result of the continued recovery of the business market and growth in the number of passengers choosing high-speed rail over plane for short-haul travel in Europe.

Industrial action ballots – when is sufficient, insufficient?

ASLEF was in the High Court twice in the days before Christmas, arguing in defence of members' rights to strike, reports Victoria Phillips of Thompsons Solicitors ...

A LATE injunction against ASLEF's strike on 23 December was sought by London Midland (LM). When they were successful, London Underground Limited tried to rely on the Judge's decision in the LM case to stop the Boxing day strike. The different outcomes are further examples of the unreasonable burdens that anti-trade union legislation imposes on unions and the legal lottery of injunction applications.

They also confirm we can expect no let up in the enthusiasm employers and their lawyers have for challenging any minor error that a union may have made during the ballot process.



LONDON MIDLAND

The dispute over the harmonisation of terms and conditions led to ASLEF sending a ballot notice to London Midland members in early November. A month later, on the day before the ballot closed, London Midland wrote to ASLEF setting out a list of alleged unlawful contraventions of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (TULRCA).

605 members were balloted: Of the 427 who returned their papers, 410 were in favour of the action. An 86.9% vote for the strike. Electoral Reform Services Ltd (ERSL), who are responsible by law for scrutinising the ballot, stated they were satisfied that there were no reasonable grounds for believing there had been any contravention.

London Midland's lawyers wrote a week later asking for the strike to be withdrawn.

Thompsons responded that ASLEF would continue with industrial action. LM issued the injunction application on 20 December, saying that the union was in breach of TULRCA for not providing an explanation to the employer of how the figures (for who should have been balloted) were arrived at.

Giving a 'proper' explanation to employers about why and how it has identified a particular group and number of members to ballot – members who are the company's employees and so ought in any case to be known to the employer – is one of the many hoops that a union must go through to meet TULRCA's tests.

What is a proper explanation is increasingly open to interpretation by the courts. This is why the outcome of injunction applications can be a lottery. It is certainly illustrated by the LM and LUL applications.

Increasingly though, only explanations that set out in detail all the steps taken in checking and cross-checking membership databases are accepted. The explanation given by ASLEF to LM that the lists and figures were as accurate as reasonably practicable, was not good enough for the court and the injunction was granted.

Mistakes were made in the ballot, and the union admitted to these. But accidentally balloting three members who should not have received papers did nothing to change the outcome. More serious mistakes happen in general elections, but they don't bring down newly elected governments.

That workers can be denied their right to strike on the basis of minor errors that have no impact on the vote, and an honest if not blow by blow explanation of how figures were arrived at, must surely be a breach of Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the right to freedom of association.

ASLEF is appealing to the Court of Appeal to get the decision overturned. The case has wide implications for the whole of the trade union movement.

LUL

Two days after the London Midland strike was stopped, a different High Court judge rejected an injunction application made by London Underground. It seems that LUL was persuaded by lawyers that the LM decision would provide a "get out of jail free card" in their efforts to stop ASLEF members taking lawful industrial action on Boxing Day.

Until then, LUL appeared to have accepted that the explanation provided by ASLEF in the



ballot notices was sufficient. Further, they were unable to rely on any identified errors. These points were significant in ASLEF persuading the court that it would be able to show it had met the statutory defence and so the injunction was not granted.

The judge's decision in LUL in relation to the explanation given in the ballot strike notices either demonstrates how every injunction application still turns on the facts of the case or, as already suggested, is a lottery. He said that while the notices could have given more information about how the figures had been arrived at, it was likely that ASLEF would succeed at trial in establishing that the explanation was sufficient. The explanation therefore complied with the statutory requirements.

'The fact that identical or near identical wording had been found to be insufficient on different facts in other cases was not in itself a reason for regarding the explanation as insufficient in the circumstances of this case,' he said.

The judge concluded with a welcome observation: 'Thus it was likely that ASLEF would be able to show that their actions were lawful, whatever the resultant inconvenience to the travelling public,' adding: 'It would not have been right to grant an injunction to restrain a strike which was likely to be lawful.'

John McDonnell's Private Members' Bill, designed to amend the law so that minor errors that do not change the outcome of an industrial action ballot are disregarded, failed last year to win sufficient support from MPs to proceed. There is no prospect that the coalition government will amend the statutory requirements to make them less onerous. It may be that union appeals against successful injunction applications on grounds of Article 11 infringement may be the best prospect for progress.



Injured?

An apology won't pay the bills, but compensation will.

Injuries can cost a lot more than accident victims initially realise.

Costs can include lost overtime, lost promotion, travel to and from medical treatments, special care needs and more.

The emotional costs can be just as heavy in their own way too.

Ruth Hart (above) suffered excruciating pain after accidental knee damage.

Says Ruth: *"I have never fully recovered. I became very angry about what had happened to me.*

So I contacted a firm of solicitors I had seen advertising about personal injury claims on TV. At first, they advised me that I might get £5,000.

But later said they didn't think I had a case"

Then Ruth was introduced to Thompsons Solicitors.

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Bob given the third degree... and doctorate!

Bob Evans started work on the railways at the age of 14 in his native Newtown in mid-Wales without any qualifications. He retired with three degrees, including a Doctorate of Philosophy, and as Head of a university department. **Chris Proctor** spoke to him about this remarkable journey ...



Bob has been mayor of Witham twice

BOB was a schoolboy in Newtown in mid-Wales when a rail worker told his mother a vacancy was due to come up as Number Taker in the local depot. She thought it sounded like an ideal opening and despatched her 14-year old son to see the stationmaster. 'It was a bolt out of the blue,' Bob says. 'But I went along with it and I was taken on. It looked like a good opportunity. After all, I came from a family of five where my mother was at home and my father was in and out of work. I was pleased to get a job and looking back, it was a great move for me.'

So having left school without a School Certificate or any other qualification, Bob started work in 1947 at Newtown. 'Those two years also saw the start of my union education,' he says. 'My work was outside and at the time I didn't have a mac or an overcoat. A union man told me I was entitled to outdoor clothing and told me what to write to ask for it.'

After a couple of years at Newtown, where he had progressed to a cleaner at Moat Lane Junction, he was offered a job as a fireman at Leamington Spa and then heard on the grapevine that there was a vacancy coming up in Welshpool.

No sooner was Bob settled there, than the time came for his National Service. After his two year stint in khaki, he returned to a different world. For one thing, he was by now a married man, and for a second his position in the depot had been taken! So he was redundant.

'I met my wife in Germany when I was stationed near Hanover between 1951 and 53. I took the opportunity of being there to learn the language, so I speak German - but not Welsh, the land where I was born.'

German girls would come along to the

camp dances, and Bob was smitten by one particular lady who had turned up for the first time. 'She didn't speak English so I was determined to pick up German properly. I remember doing extra guard duties to buy an English-German dictionary.'

His studies reaped their own reward: when he was demobbed, Bob arrived back in Newtown with a German wife! He says she suffered very little post-war prejudice. 'Newtown was used to Germans as there was a Prisoner of War camp there. I think we all just wanted to forget.'

Bob and his bride had to move to

“ I REMEMBER DOING EXTRA GUARD DUTIES TO BUY AN ENGLISH-GERMAN DICTIONARY ”

Shrewsbury. 'I didn't want to, as we'd just settled into a new little house. But in the end, it proved to be the making of me.'

The seeds of union involvement that had been sown in the Newtown stationmaster's office began to thrive. Bob quickly became involved in Shrewsbury's active ASLEF branch and it wasn't long before Bob was part of the LDC.

'I was a local rep for ten years and harboured hopes of becoming an ASLEF officer at the time. But there were a lot of good men in the depot at the time and I didn't think these ambitions were realistic. It was then I saw that the TUC were offering scholarships. I

decided to apply.'

'Partly it was the result of meeting managers and realising two things: they weren't so clever - and I wasn't so dumb! I resented people talking down to me. Anyway, I met a former rail man one evening who said he was on his way to start an English course at Shrewsbury Tech, the technical college.

'I had nothing to lose, so I went along with him. Well, I passed an O Level and it inspired me. Gave me confidence. I rather fell in love with the concept of further education. Eventually I added O Levels in History, Geography, Commerce - and German - where I had a private tutor at home! It was then I saw an advert for a TUC award in the ASLEF Journal.

'It was a bit of a risk as it meant leaving the railways to go to a residential course at Faircroft College Birmingham, set up by the Cadbury Trust. It was a year-long Liberal Studies course but didn't lead to any qualification. Still I thought if I passed I might get into a teachers' training college. In fact, I got Salford University.'

Bob took his degree in Economics and Political Science and, after a year at Wolverhampton Teacher Training college,

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB or journal@aslef.org.uk

secured his first post as a lecturer in Industrial Relations at West Ham in September 1974.

Memories of those days make him very angry about the introduction of student fees. 'I don't care what they say, if there had been fees I could not have gone to university. As it was, with free education and a grant, I had to give up the beer and the fags and work every weekend as a gardener to make ends meet. It is a disgrace what they are doing today. They are pricing poorer children out of their right to education – or landing them with debt levels that will cripple their lives.'

At West Ham his teaching got Bob involved again with trade unions, something he continued with on his appointment as Head of Industrial Relations at the South West London College. By this time Bob had also picked up a Masters and a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Bob says he particularly enjoyed working with ASLEF members, 'men I knew and understood'. Among others who passed through his classes in those days were the Chair of our retired members' section, Tony West, and one-time general secretary Lou Adams. Then he completed one final degree – comparing UK and German union organisation – and later became Head of Industrial Relations at South West London College, where he remained until he went freelance in 1987.

During those years Bob had little time for any activities outside studying and doing some work for the Fabians – but – and let this be an encouragement to all our members closing in on retirement - when Bob retired he decided the time was right to increase his active involvement in politics. It wasn't long before he was a councillor and eventually served two terms as mayor of Witham. He was also the Labour group leader on Braintree



Bob as he is today



Bob remembering the 'good old days'!

Council for a number of years.

Yet for all his fascinating life, Bob says one of his greatest feelings of joy and achievement was the day he passed out as a driver. He chuckles as he says, 'I felt like a band was playing!' And to this day he wears his ASLEF tie and badge with pride. 'It's to remind people that this union is 'the tops' for me. Footplate staff are, and always will be 'the aristocracy of labour'.



In 1954 Bob lived in a railway house in Welshpool



On the Royal Train at Shrewsbury with Driver Morris in 1967



Bob remembered this model train at Arkwright Road from his last visit in an ASLEF capacity, half a century ago



A trip down memory lane with ASLEF's portraits of former leaders

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The February 1911 Locomotive Journal included a report from Bradford about 'Superheaters', warnings about banana skins and a reprieve for roller-skating ..!

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM BRADFORD

"The monthly meeting of the above branch was held on December 4th, and after the official business had been completed, we were treated to another splendid lecture by Brother Wesson, who had every encouragement given both by the record attendance and the interest shown. The subject of his lecture was "Diagrams and the Superheater", and the audience (which filled every corner of the

room), seemed delighted. His lecture took over an hour and gave one the impression that he had expended much thought and brainwork over his subject, and as I sat and listened to him I thought that if "Medical Man", of John Bull fame, had been there, he would have altered his opinion with regard to all the brains having been given to the upper classes, and if he had heard the quick replies to the questions asked (of which there were a great many), he would have found out that

there are some engine –drivers – who have at one time been engine cleaners – who would stand well up against a ship's captain or engineer."

THE DANGER OF BANANA SKINS

"Last year, a passenger slipped on a banana skin, fell, and fractured his right arm, at the Baker Street station of the Metropolitan Railway. He recently brought an action against the railway company and was awarded £500 damages. Against this verdict the company will appeal, on the ground that the accident was due to the carelessness of some person in throwing down the skin. A stay of execution was granted."

SKATING IN THE STREET

"The Home Secretary has refused to ratify a bye-law, passed by the Stoke Newington (North London) Borough Council, prohibiting roller-skating in their streets. Mr. Churchill defended the pastime, holding that the opportunities for outdoor exercise in London are so few that it would be a mistaken policy to put a stop to roller-skating. The ordinary pedestrians will scarcely be likely to agree with his decision. People are frequently jostled and run into by heedless skaters, and much annoyance and inconvenience are caused by this "outdoor exercise."

○ Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott

The law bans strikes, so the Tories don't need to bother



**argues National
Organiser Simon
Weller**

D AVID CAMERON says he has no plans for new strike laws. Maybe that's because he doesn't need any. Even if he does nothing, the courts will outlaw any strike for him. .

The Tories expect worker resistance to their spending cuts – but know they will be helped by a series of recent judgements limiting unions' ability to take lawful and just industrial action.

MORE RAMSEY THAN JUSTICE

Last month London Midland identified three erroneous ballot papers out of 605 issued – and dragged us to the High Court. Mr. Justice Ramsey said there was 'no demonstrable audit' and served an injunction against planned

strike action.

This was a ballot for action over a two-year-old industrial dispute supported by 86.9% of the 78% members who voted. Justice Ramsey decided that having head office staff, branch secretaries and local reps manually check every member in London Midland does not count as an audit! He ruled that the error was not accidental, thus preventing us using a clause allowing mistakes and minor errors. He also denied us the right of appeal. He made comparisons between this and a recent RMT dispute where the RMT wrote to every member after discovering their membership data was seriously flawed. Ours is not.

STRIKING AT PROFITS IN EUROPE

Even this highhanded approach pales in comparison to 'proportionality' – which claims to 'balance' workers' rights to strike with rights to free trade and profit. Case law was established in the European Court of Justice rulings involving Viking, Laval/Vaxholm, Ruffert

and Luxembourg.

The principle of 'proportionality' comes from German law framed in the 1960/70s to deal with civil disobedience. For example, the German courts ruled a demonstration by farmers driving tractors slowly and blocking an autobahn 'disproportionate' because the public inconvenience was greater than the farmers' original complaint. The action had to be 'proportionate'

UNWANTED IMPORT

The UK has no history of this – but the argument of 'proportionality' was deployed successfully in the UK in the cases of BA vs. Unite (2008) and Network Rail vs. RMT (2010), arguing that the commercial damage would outweigh the reason for the dispute. It was even referenced in the LM judgement against ASLEF, with 'inconvenience to passengers' offered as a supporting reason

The problem for us is that anything we do can be declared 'disproportionate' – because although we are numerically small, our membership density and discipline guarantees train services will not run.

David Cameron may say he won't tighten the laws on strikes. He doesn't need to. Because if he doesn't like them an unelected, unaccountable judiciary will declare them unlawful for him.

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Struggling to prevent rail suicides



Andy Botham, the Secretary of our East Midlands Trains company council, has joined a new national suicide

prevention group. Here he looks at some of the committee's work, explains his role – and asks you to contact him with any ideas you have ...

LAST year Network Rail and the Samaritans joined the transport police and other railway stakeholders to form the National Suicide Prevention Group (NSPG). The objective it has set itself is to reduce suicides on the railway by 20% in the next five years. After my involvement in aftercare work following a fatality, I was invited to join the group, and I did so willingly. I'd get involved in anything that can reduce the trauma of a fatality for our members, quite irrespective of any sympathy we have for the dead person.

The NSPG meets every four weeks to discuss ideas and implement strategies. The meetings are chaired by Network Rail's Head of Community Safety, Martin Gallagher, and include representatives from the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), the transport police (BTP), London Underground (LUL) and the Train Operating Companies (TOCs).

In the East Midlands we have also set up a Regional Suicide Prevention Group (RSPG), which meets after each national meeting to cascade information and work as a steering group to develop and deliver local initiatives. I have to say that East Midlands Trains have been very supportive of my involvement in both these groups.

I have stressed at the meetings that we should be examining the aftercare of staff following an incident as well as the prevention of suicides. With the backing of the Samaritans I proposed a work stream to address after care for railway staff and I'm pleased to say it was backed unanimously.

AFTERCARE FOR DRIVERS

As part of this project we are now working on a number of issues

- We're producing a booklet that aims to provide help for staff following involvement in a fatality. It will include information on what to expect in terms of emotions and list areas of help that can be found, including the Samaritans. ASLEF will be able to have input into this publication and agree the final draft. Hopefully we will have a draft by February that I can put to the executive council.

- The Samaritans will provide training to



members of railway staff on how to spot potential suicide cases, and how to approach them in the correct manner. This training has already had a number of recorded successes and resulted in incidents being avoided.

- The Samaritans have also agreed to produce and deliver training for representatives on how best to advise and deal with our members following a fatal incident. As the ASLEF representative, I will be meeting the course provider to discuss content. We hope this six-hours training event will be available by March.

BTP AND SAMARITANS

In the past people attempting to use the railway as a means of committing suicide were often taken to hospital, treated and released – only to return and succeed in a subsequent attempt. Now these cases are monitored, with the BTP informing station staff to be aware of such individuals.

The Samaritans have had a high-profile advertising campaign on stations, concentrating on known 'hot spots'. Through the NSPG monitor suicides nationally, enabling the Samaritans to concentrate efforts on areas of most risk. They also plan to provide on the ground support for station staff, either using a 24-hour phone support line or in some instances by personal counselling.

Although the Suicide Prevention Groups are relatively new, my region has seen a considerable reduction in fatalities over the last eight months.

HOT LINE AND YOUR IDEAS

I have been able to discuss the Fatality Hot Line, including the thinking behind questions asked of drivers, with BTP representatives. Basically they want to establish if the incident



was a crime or an accident and if anybody else was involved. This allows the BTP to establish if the site is a crime scene. It also enables the BTP to take control of the scene. We see this as preferable to dealing with civilian police because the BTP have a better knowledge of the workings of the railways and tend to treat drivers with more dignity.

If Civil Police take control of the site, they breathalyse and caution the driver and close the site while they consider if a crime has been committed. This leads to drivers not being relieved or attended by an inspector and usually leads to lengthy line closures to everyone's inconvenience.

In the future I would like to see an industry standard for dealing with staff after a fatality; a high standard of counselling for staff following an incident; and the inclusion of railway suicide within the initial Driver training programme.

Finally, if you have any ideas that you would like to feed into the Group, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me through the Derby branch – my details are in the ASLEF diary under Company Council, Midlands Trains. I don't know everything that can be done – but together, as a union, ASLEF does.

Should **Wales** have more powers of self-government

YES



says **Hywel Francis** - it will make us stronger

MARCH 3 is an important date in Wales this year. Shortly after St David's Day the people of Wales will have the democratic right, through a Referendum, to extend the powers of their National Assembly for Wales.

Carwyn Jones, the First Minister in the Welsh Assembly Government, has explained the issue very simply in this way:

'It's about using powers more freely. At the moment, the Assembly can make laws in the areas it's responsible for, like health and education, but very often we

have to ask Westminster first for the powers to do so....

The question you have to ask yourself is this. Do you think that those laws which only affect Wales should be made by people that you elected as Assembly Members and who you can kick out if you don't like what they're doing? Which system is the more democratic and best for Wales?

For those who will say this is a big step and that Ministers and AMs in Wales do not have the experience and ability to do this, we need to state that since the Labour Government's 2006

Government of Wales Act, powers have been delegated to the Assembly through legislative competence orders. With the co-operative work of Westminster's Welsh Affairs Committee – which I chaired – and several Assembly Committees, many significant powers were transferred. It was a steep learning curve for everyone in the skills of drafting and scrutinising. Some delays were caused not by the process itself but by Ministerial inexperience, notably in housing and fire-sprinklers proposals.

By contrast, there was some

exemplary work in significantly improving proposals by joint AM/MP work particularly on Welsh language and this was achieved unanimously.

That however is now behind us. The National Assembly for Wales is ready to take on full law-making powers within such key areas as health and education, having gone through the learning experiences of the past five years.

The Yes Campaign has made a good start with the four main parties within the National Assembly supporting it, along with such important bodies as the Wales TUC – a long standing supporter of democratic devolution since the 1970s – backing it. Broad-based local groups are also being set up all over Wales.

But the challenge is still a very considerable one. There is a need to get the positive message across in order to achieve a high turn-out which will legitimise the result. A low turn-out will undermine the result and our democracy.

As a campaigner for democratic devolution I know how important it is to take the argument beyond simply a constitutional matter: that is what happened in the heavy defeat in 1979 and the close vote in 1997: on both occasions the challenge of linking these changes to an improvement to the quality of life of ordinary people was not well made.

So, any constitutional change will require the enthusiastic endorsement of Wales' great estates. Not the aristocratic landed estates of the past, but the working class housing estates across Wales, whose working class families are under threat today from the present Conservative led Coalition Government's Spending Review and consequent substantial public



re ment?



Plaid Cymru leader Ieuan Wyn Jones with National Organiser Simon Weller and members of the Holyhead branch at the meeting Ieuan addressed last month

Plaid leader backs 'Not For Profit' rail

SPEAKING to a well attended meeting of the Holyhead branch last month, Ieuan Wyn Jones explained Plaid Cymru's proposals for a 'not for profit' company to run the railways in Wales when the current franchise expires in 2018. Ieuan is Plaid Cymru's leader, Deputy First Minister in the Welsh Assembly's Labour/Plaid coalition and Transport minister for Wales.

Ieuan started by

explaining that it was not the Welsh Assembly that had negotiated the current agreement with Arriva Trains Wales - but the Department for Transport in London. He doesn't consider the current agreement has been beneficial for Wales, as passenger growth has far exceeded the forecast on which it was based, resulting in overcrowding on all lines. As Arriva Trains Wales only work to their current deal, any extra

services requested by the Assembly has to be funded by the Assembly.

'REINVESTMENT IS THE KEY'

In his role as transport minister Ieuan has used Assembly money to purchase rolling stock to cut the high cost of leasing. He told us that the second loco-hauled service between Holyhead and Cardiff due later this year will consist of Assembly-owned carriages. 'These proposals,' he declared, 'will allow profits to be reinvested in the company rather than paid out to shareholders. This means the railway would retain the £165m subsidy currently paid to ATW.'

Ieuan said they are also examining re-opening lines, especially where the track still existed but did not rule out entirely new lines. An agreement is in place with Network Rail to put another track along the single that runs from Chester to Wrexham,

and consideration is given to double lines at other locations. Raising line speeds and electrification were also proposed.

Responding to this, National Organiser Simon Weller said he's found Ieuan's contribution 'a breath of fresh air'. 'It consisted much of things our union has campaigned for,' Simon said. While he noted the very real difficulties Ieuan had spoken about, he felt they were issues that needed to find solutions. He also outlined for the meeting how ASLEF had bid for the franchise of the East Coast Mainline on the same not-for-profit basis the Plaid were proposing

Ieuan and Simon then answered questions to conclude the formal business of a very informative evening - which concluded with cold beverages and warm conversations! **Kevin Ederle, Secretary, Holyhead branch**

sector cuts.

A good and bold start has been made thanks to democratic devolution with the joint statement of the First Ministers of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and their opposition to the swingeing public expenditure cuts.

March will be an important month for the people of Wales. Voting Yes on March 3 will give Wales a stronger voice in resisting the cuts, and marching in London on March 26 in support of the TUC demonstration also to resist the cuts will be equally important.

● Hywel Francis MP is the Labour MP for Aberavon. This article is based in part on his Welsh Political Archive Lecture 2010.

NO



says Rachel Banner – devolution comes at too high a price

THE 2011 referendum will set the direction of Wales for decades: the idea that it is just about law-making power is absurd.

ASLEF members are being asked to give the Assembly the 'tools to do the job'. It's a 'big ask' for a vote of confidence in the achievement of the first devolution decade. We in True Wales, many of whom are Labour Party members and supporters, myself included, say 'the job' on the fundamentals has been so poor that those responsible shouldn't have any more tools till the basics have been got right.

Nothing could be more important than rebuilding the Welsh economy, after the ravages of the 1980s, into a modern 21st century high tech economy, paying good wages for high skills. In the first devolution decade Wales had steadily rising budgets and huge EU funding. This one off opportunity has been squandered by the Welsh Assembly Government: we remain the UK's poorest

nation, with the prosperity gap relative to the other three nations widening over this period; our manufacturing base has declined significantly and our private sector is smaller than any other part of the UK.

The launch of the Economic Renewal Programme in 2010 is a decade too late for Wales: we now face the severity of UK Coalition cuts with a structural economic weakness which leaves us very vulnerable.

The inadequate craftsmanship extends to education. We were promised a 'Learning Country': after 10 years of devolution we are bottom of the UK class - and falling - in the internationally-tested mathematical, reading and scientific skills which are the very basis of a high-tech future for Wales. Where is the devolution dividend for our young people?

As a country, we have not invested sufficiently in our education system. How can it be right that a pupil in Wales has £527 less spent on him than is the case in England? We have the

highest percentage of 16-18 year olds in the UK who are not in education, employment or training.

We are all UK citizens paying the same taxes, but since devolution we do not get the same standards of service. What would Aneurin Bevan, with his commitment to universal standards of healthcare across the UK from John O'Groats to Lands End, have made of a Wales in which devolution has left us with poorer stroke and cancer services, slower ambulance response times and A&E waiting times than in England?

What the hard-working people of Wales need from Cardiff Bay politicians is better government, not more laws and further steps on the path to separation from the UK.

● Rachel Banner, a spokesperson for True Wales, was educated at London, Oxford and Cardiff Universities. She currently works as a teacher and is a longstanding member of the Labour Party.



Michael Palin is the first to sign up to the Fair Fares Now campaign. Photos: Campaign for better transport

Fair Fares Now!

A new campaign launched by Campaign for Better Transport is calling for cheaper, simpler and fairer train tickets ...

COMMUTERS buying their season tickets as they came back to work in January faced a nasty shock. Train fares regulated by the Government, including most commuter fares, have jumped by up to 12.8%. And some passengers are now being forced to fork out a fifth of the average UK salary for their season tickets – that's the equivalent of transport secretary Philip Hammond MP being asked to pay £27,034 for a season ticket from his salary.

Many commuters will be asking just what the Government thinks it's doing for the railways? Philip Hammond has made much of continued investment in rail, with rail infrastructure escaping the worst of the cuts in the spending review. But trumpeting individual investment in Crossrail, Thameslink and the proposed HS2 line from Birmingham to London doesn't make up for a lack of clarity about what government ministers actually want from the railways.

Even the work under Roy McNulty on reducing costs in the

railway lacks clarity – unsure whether to bear down on the complex costs of multiple companies involved in decisions or whether to go back to Beeching and look at cutting back on less used but still vital services.

The one clear message from Government though is that passengers are going to be squeezed to get more and more money to pay for improvements – though they may not see improvements on their line or for many years to come. And passengers may also depend more and more for improvements on their individual train company rather than Government using the franchise system to guarantee better services for passengers.

All this means that even the Government admits that higher fares will price passengers off the railways, particularly with even higher fare rises from 2012 (when average increases will be 3% above inflation rather than 1%). This will lead to 4% fewer journeys by train than would otherwise be the case.

We are in a tough climate for

funding but ministers know that they're facing stiff opposition. Many of the seats that the Conservatives won from Labour in 2005 have plenty of commuters facing steep rises in fares. Commuters in seats like Stevenage, Gillingham and Rainham and Chatham and Aylesford will face paying up to a thousand pounds more for their season tickets by the time of the next election. The decision to move to high fare rises in 2012 was the single most unpopular move in last October's spending review.

These are the voters that the Conservatives and Lib Dems need to get backing from if they're to stay in power at the next election and for Labour to win back if they are to be back in government. All three parties need to start showing what they're going to do to win the commuter vote.

Little wonder then that passengers are joining our Fair Fares Now campaign to demand simpler, fairer and, above all, cheaper fares. Our new campaign website at www.fairfaresnow.org.uk has been inundated with people signing up to support the campaign.

But it's not just the fare rises that are a sign of the Government not really being sure quite who they're running the railways for. The move to allow train companies much more flexibility in franchises has been presented

as allowing them to invest in improved services. But without strong performance measures for passengers they could do the opposite.

Many of the things that passengers want – like manned stations or ticket offices open outside peak hours – don't necessarily bring much of a return for companies and could be the first to go if companies are allowed to focus on those elements in their franchise that bring in extra income. There are obvious concerns for staff too, and these need to be clearly addressed in new franchises, as I'm sure ASLEF and other unions will be seeking to do. Both the issue of fares and of franchises show how much more the Government needs to do to convince people that it knows what it wants from the railways.

In April, Roy McNulty will report back on how much can be achieved in cost savings in the railways. If savings can be found without compromising safety or standards, then it must be used to reverse the price rises the government has planned. And if the Government gives the go-ahead for longer franchises then it must ensure that the train operating companies provide fairer and simpler fares. Passengers are tired of the complexity of knowing exactly what constitutes peak periods for travel, or of having to predict the exact time they want to travel to and back weeks in advance in order to be able to buy cheaper fares.

Above all we need an agenda that is about growing our railways – not just new high speed trains between Birmingham and London but ensuring that our rail can provide for our everyday travel needs at a price that is affordable and a service that is accessible and not overcrowded.



Transport Secretary "Philip Hammond" as a pickpocket

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BACK THE ALTERNATIVE

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more details at
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www.falseeconomy.org.uk



Union education is a rewarding journey that will last a lifetime

SITTING in traffic on the M25 making my way to Ruskin College in Oxford, for a weekend of lectures and PowerPoint presentations in such subjects as Applied Labour Relations, The English Legal System and Employment Law, I ask myself why would someone who is thirty-seven years of age, has a wife and three little children and a good job as a train driver, want to spend their own time writing assignments and revising for exams. But this is a journey I make every month, come rain or shine, and all in the name of education.

Like many students I was described in my school reports as "Lazy, could do better", this unfortunately was true. I did pass some GCSE's and continued my education with A-level studies but soon lost the dedication needed to be successful.

After leaving full time education all I wanted was to work and earn money and leave text books and essays behind.

On my election as Barking Mainline Local Representative my Company Council Representative Kevin Langley, suggested I should study the stage one union reps course, which he had taken. From

then my studying and my eagerness for knowledge has escalated. Stage one was followed by Stage two but it was the next course that really started me down the road towards studying for a degree.

The course was a diploma in Employment Law at Lewisham College, where course tutor Dawn Livingstone gave me great encouragement and motivated me to continue to the next level of education.

Whilst at Lewisham I applied for a place on the International Labour and Trade Union Studies degree at Ruskin which is a part-time residential course and was invited to an interview with the course professors, Dennis Gregory and Alan Irwin.

I was honoured when they offered me a place. I have recently finished my first year, just another five to go!

It's not all about the lectures and presentations, the people on the course also provide union experience and it is this wealth of knowledge that union education needs for it to develop in the future.

In my group there are eight fellow students, from different union backgrounds, these include

Unite, Unison, PCS, RMT and USDAW. I thought it was not possible to get a second chance to gain an education and believe me it's not easy; I still have to find time for my family; I still drive a train; I still carry out my union duties, but with the overwhelming support from ASLEF, the dedication from the tutors who have taught with passion and the guidance and help from my fellow students who are sharing this journey of six years hard work, I know I can succeed in finally changing the 'he could do better' report cards.

Union education is not just something that I can do. Any ASLEF member can start a similar journey, be it learning new skills at a local college or taking lessons

set up by your union learning representative at your place of work, perhaps embarking on a stage one course in Health and Safety.

For me the last couple of years have completely changed my life and I hope it will lead to opportunities for me to pass on my knowledge to other union members and progressing ASLEF's education policy.

As Geoff Stuttard said in last month's Journal 'Union education was a seed that has grown into an important part of ASLEF's work'. It is a testament to that importance that we should enhance learning within the union movement for the good of generations to come.

Mark Daniels
Barking Mainline Rep



The college bar offers a good opportunity to unwind after lectures and to have a little banter with colleagues

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New feature
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ARTICLES!

KENNY HOWELL A POPULAR DRIVER

SADLY I have to report the passing of another Ripple Lane Pathfinder Brother Kenny Howell. After National Service, Ken started his railway career at Plaistow Steam Depot in 1950 on the LTS railway (now C2C) and had the honour of having the once famous Joe Brown firing to him.

Ken moved to Ripple Lane when Plaistow closed where he remained until retiring when Ripple Lane closed in 1993. Ken was a popular Driver and enjoyed a good laugh and a joke. He was invited to

appear with three other Drivers in a television show alongside Joe Brown, who talked about his early career and the people he worked with before climbing the ladder to 'stardom'.

Ken became green carded early in life and spent a lot of time ferrying loco's around the depot's confines and yards. He was also a connoisseur of the depot's welfare's one arm bandit, (allegedly) always knowing when the Jackpot was about to pay out. For extra 'nut money' Ken multitasked, doing odd DIY jobs around the depot. He also did the TCS's /DTM's job as a panel foreman. Ken enjoyed his retirement,

getting out and about and joining the Friday once a month retirees for a drink at the LT Club at Hornchurch. Ken was in his late seventies when he died while undergoing treatment for cancer in Queens Hospital, Romford, Essex when he suffered a heart attack. Unfortunately the lads could not pay their respects as it was Ken's wish to leave his body to science, and it is understood that four people have already benefited directly from his passing. Our condolences go out to his wife Sheila, Ken's family and friends.

Cliff Blackwell, Tilbury Branch Reporter (not retired)

BOB FLOOD

I AM sad to inform you that my father Robert passed away on the 2nd of December, aged 72.

He started his career as an Engine cleaner at Eastleigh shed in April 1953, eventually passing out for driving and moving to Basingstoke in 1965 where, aside from a few years back at Eastleigh in the early 90's he remained until his retirement with SWT in January 1997.

He was a proud union member and always wore an ASLEF badge of sorts on his uniform. He always enjoyed his work until the final couple of years under privatisation which he very much opposed at the time.

I have attached a photo from 1987 showing dad on the footplate of ex S&DJ Rly 53809 during the Southern steam revival of that time, these were some of the best years that I can remember.



Stewart Flood, Eastleigh

A colleague adds ...

I had the pleasure of working with Bob Flood at Basingstoke and Eastleigh. He was involved in the Popham tunnel collision when a class 33 hit the EMU it was going to assist, and more importantly survived the Clapham Junction crash with minor injuries. During the 1950's Bob served his country in the

Catering Corps based in West Germany, although this wasn't his first choice of army job, Bob told me that he did well out of it, getting the best food going at the time. Bob will be sadly missed by former workmates throughout the former Southern Region.

Brian Denton. Former Eastleigh LDC Sec (1991-2002) Former Basingstoke Branch Chairman (1984-88)

PETER ROBERTS

I WOULD like to remember Peter Roberts in the ASLEF Journal. I don't have all Peter's dates - but I believe he started work at Kings Cross (top Shed) in about 1952 at the age of sixteen. Peter progressed from cleaning engines to fireman to driver and finally retired in 2001. Peter leaves two sons (Ian and Toby) and two grandchildren (Eleanor and Sam). His big love was for his family - he had three siblings and many nephews and nieces.

He loved his home - hated sitting around doing nothing - and when we moved to Shropshire, there was certainly a lot for him to do!

Kate Roberts

A colleague adds...

Peter was always a pleasure to work with, and I think I can truthfully say was well liked by colleagues. A proud owner of an ASLEF 50 Year Medallion, when it was announced that Peter had died many asked 'of what?' Well it seems he died of prostate cancer that migrated to his bones, so, (please excuse the pun), for Pete's sake don't be shy, if you think you have a problem in that area go and see the doc, may Peter RIP.

Peter Smith, ASLEF RMS & Kings Cross Reporter

PAUL JONES ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE UNION FOR 35 YEARS

IT IS with regret that I have to inform you of the death of retired Rugby Driver, Paul Jones at the age of 68.

Following a long illness, Paul passed away at his family home in Rugby on Monday 22 November 2010.

Born Paul Ernest Jones on 31 May 1942, he lived in the village of Brafild, Northamptonshire. He was educated at the local school where he excelled in his studies, to such an extent that he managed to pass the 11 plus. However he was unable to

attend grammar school as he was one of a large number of pupils chasing a small number of these coveted places in the education system of the time.

After leaving school at 15, armed with a good education and a boyhood interest in the railways, Paul applied for a job at Northampton on the Footplate. None were available and so he opted for the position of engine cleaner, this being the first rung of the ladder into the driver grade. In 1970 he finally realised his ambition and

became a driver. He worked for some years at Waterloo and Marylebone, before returning to Rugby where he remained until his retirement in 2003.

Paul was a trade unionist and a loyal member of ASLEF. He represented the union in many capacities at local and district level, including Branch Sec, H&S Rep, Welfare Officer, District Sec, and committee member to name but a few. He also attended and represented district at several AADs. In total Paul was actively involved in

the Union for 35 years until 2002, just a year before his retirement.

Paul's funeral took place on Friday 3 December in Rugby. A full church showed the measure of respect and popularity he enjoyed from within and outside the railway community.

He is survived by his wife Joy and sons Trevor and Peter. Our thoughts and condolences are with his family at this sad time. **Alexander Lakic, Branch Secretary**

Not flat in the end at Leamington Spa meeting!

LEAMINGTON SPA Branch held its AGM on Sunday 5th December.

We were pleased to be joined by Dave Calfe, the EC member for District 6, and by Vic Waite (Chair) and Roy Woodward (Secretary) from the Retired Members Section, to report on their activities over the past year.

I was hoping to attach a photo of the meeting, but unfortunately I only discovered when we got there that the camera batteries were flat! There's a lesson to be

learned there!

After the normal branch activities, Dave spoke on the following ASLEF activities: the upturn of work in the freight industry, disputes and problems with DBS, the on-going harmonisation ballot on London Midland, the resolving of disputes on Arriva Trains Wales, the on-going discussions with London Underground over Boxing Day arrangements, ASLEF's campaign for free travel for non-safeguarded

staff, the movement of Head Office and issues relating to pensions.

Vic Waite said retired members' meetings had been held in April, July and August with the club dinner in May and a buffet in September.

We were sorry to hear of the loss of two members - Roy Smith in April and Paul Jones in November. The branch passed on its condolences to their respective family and friends.

Vic and Roy were then presented with gifts donated by the Branch for the RMS Christmas Party Raffle.

The branch would like to thank all those ASLEF officers who have visited us at meetings over this last year. We are only a small Branch, and therefore having people taking time out on their Sundays to come and visit us is very much appreciated.

Nick Walker, Branch Reporter, Leamington Spa

A good night to remember in Ipswich

ARMISTICE DAY saw the 37th consecutive Ipswich retired drivers' reunion. The first event, in 1973 was attended by the great Ray Buckton – and it's still going strong.

It was a fantastic sight as everyone sat down for dinner wearing their poppies, but before we ate we reminded ourselves of our brothers John Blyth, Peter Parsey and Tony Maile who had joined the top link in the previous 12 months.

The poem 'In Flanders Fields' was read out in their memory and to mark our respect for all our fallen soldiers.

The guest speaker this year was EC member Nigel Gibson who updated us on ASLEF's work on pensions, an issue close to all our hearts. Nigel then kindly presented retirement certificates to Bob Woods and Albert Larkins (pictured).

The oldest retired driver present was 92-year-old Tom Mole who started on the railway in 1936. What a round of applause he got! George Lown won the quiz, which included him knowing that the East Anglian 2859 was previously named 'City of Norwich' – a topic close to Ipswich



men's hearts! The final presentation was to Albert Larkins from his National Express East Anglia workmates – and included a parachute jump!

It was another great 'do' which was enjoyed by all.

Kelvy Higgins, Re-union organiser

'Snow way' our AGM was being cancelled!

BARNHAM'S AGM and retirement presentation seemed to be one of the few events that survived the winter elements. Many members were unable to attend due to the poor weather conditions – but those who did fight the elements were treated to Bob Taylor's own special brand of retirement speeches. Bob – an ex LDC and equal opportunity rep – said good bye to the railway after 27 years service.

Barnham was also celebrating the retirement of Tony Watt, another loyal ASLEF member who was saying goodbye after 49 years. Tony is looking forward to spending more time with his family and enjoying days out across the network, so you may see him on a train near you soon.

Barnham branch would like to send their best wishes to both Bob and Tony, and wish them a very happy retirement.

Jeff Turner, Barnham

LAST December Kevin Moir, Chairman of the Kings Cross branch, had the pleasure of presenting a 20 year badge to Mick O'Shea to commemorate his two decades of loyal union membership. Then we all retired to socialise in the fashion that comrades do!

Peter Smith, Reporter, Kings Cross Branch

20 year badge for Mick at Kings Cross



Thirsty days for ASLEF's (rather misleadingly named) Temperance Society!

ON 20 November last year, Alan Taylor and I joined the (rather misleadingly named!) outing which left Kings on the 07.10 to Leeds. We then moved onto Keighley, where we were met by a manager of the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway who acted

as our tour guide. Our outward journey was by a German-built preserved Rail Bus and we stopped off at various points to tour the Engine & Carriage Works.

After looking around the Loco Shed and works at Haworth, we

adjourned to the Royal Oak to be served with a first-class three-course meal before returning to Haworth Station to catch a steam-hauled train back to Keighley. I think I speak for everyone who attended when I thank Dave Lovering for using

his organising skills in setting up the outing. He says he is now working on setting up a picket-line at the Shepherds Neame brewery at Faversham next March.

Peter Smith, Reporter, Retired Members' Section



Colin Smith presents Alan Hayes with a specially engraved model train to commemorate his 35 years as an ASLEF member

Kirkdale honours Gary and remembers Cally

THE Kirkdale Branch's AGM last December was a well-attended and lively meeting that began with EC President Alan Donnelly updating members on the state of the union, its

finances and the current pensions situation and District 3 Organiser Colin Smith speaking about ASLEF's proposals for the impending pay talks.

Despite the freezing temperatures (both outside and in!) many members; friends and colleagues from other depots and grades braved the conditions and made their way to the Casa Club in Liverpool for the 'open' Presentation Night that followed.

Bro Gary Navarro

was presented with his 15-years membership badge, Bro Shaun Curtin with his 20 year badge, Company Council Rep Bro Paul Hart with his 25 year badge and Bro Alan Hayes with his well-earned 35 year badge and a specially engraved model train.

This was followed by a very moving part of the night, when Belinda Callaghan, widow of former Company Council Rep Brian Callaghan, unveiled a commemorative plaque in memory of Brian. Many of Brian's friends had come along to witness the unveiling and to remember a sorely missed father, husband, friend and colleague who sadly passed away at the end of 2008.

Overall, the cold winter's night outside turned into a warm memorable event inside - and special thanks should go to all who came along and made it so.

Tony Whitehead,
Secretary,
Kirkdale Branch



This plaque for Brian 'Cally' Callaghan is on permanent display in the back function room of the CASA on Hope Street in Liverpool

Upcoming events

ASLEF MEMBERS REUNION AT BRIGHTON - 17 MAY

An informal open afternoon is to be held for all active and retired ASLEF members who have been connected to Brighton and Sussex Motive Power Depots past and present on 17 May. It will be held in the Brighton Railway Club in Belmont off Dyke Road from 15.00.

A buffet will be provided. All members having a connection with Brighton or Sussex Motive Power Depots are welcome to come along and meet with their old footplate colleagues. Turn up or for further details contact Ivan Wilson on 07949862393 or Paul Edwards on 07894602991.

CRICKLEWOOD REUNION

The next Cricklewood reunion will be held on Friday 11 March from 11.30 at The RAFA Club in Ashburnham Road Bedford. The organisers are Grahame Nash at Bristol and Bob Hodson at Wolverhampton.

OTHER REUNION DATES

Ramsgate 7 April
Tonbridge 7 July
Rainham 6 October
Kings Cross Retirement Celebration 13 May at Hatfield
Kings Cross Reunion 26 August

EASTLEIGH

There will be a reunion at the old BRSA Club at Eastleigh on 12 March from 12.00 to 18.00. All drivers, secondmen and guards are welcome. A free buffet will be supplied.

GILLINGHAM

The catering was top notch as usual at the Gillingham members' October reunion. The 2011 dates for your diary are;

Ramsgate April 7th
Tonbridge July 7th
Rainham October 6th

Eastleigh Branch marks retirements of two loyal members

THE Eastleigh branch marked the recent retirements of loyal ASLEF members Paul Love and Brian Butcher. We wish them both long and active retirements.

Paul joined the footplate at Eastleigh in 1974 and remained there for 36 years during the many changes of company between BR and DB Schenker.

Easy going and very keen on boating, Paul became known as 'Captain Love'. I know his boat is currently based in the South of France, so we can guess where he was heading after taking early retirement in October!

During his years at Eastleigh, Paul was a valuable asset as a Minder Driver, passing his skills on to the new generation of drivers. A steady and well liked colleague, Paul will be

greatly missed.

Brian 'Butch' Butcher joined BR at Eastleigh in 1970, one of the first to start on the footplate following the modernisation of 1967. Always a very keen railwayman, he moved to Waterloo in 1977 for his driver's appointment. It took 10 years of travelling each day from Christchurch before Butch returned to Eastleigh.

Butch was always very keen on the freight side of our business, so it came as no surprise when he opted to stay that side of the various depot splits of the 1990s, eventually ending up with DB Schenker. When Butch joined the EWS steam team 10 years ago, he immediately showed a natural ability for that form of traction.

Butch is a very keen engineman and when he progressed to mainline steam driver, I'm sure it was the highlight of his 40-year footplate career. I have known Butch all of that time and count him a good friend and colleague. His less well-known side is that of an accredited free-lance photographer in auto sport and Formula 1 racing. This interest has taken him world wide, and we feature in a new business venture following retirement.

Butch did his last shift just before Christmas, and took retirement from the first day of this year. He'll be missed throughout the former Southern Region.

Brian Denton, Eastleigh LDC Sec (1991-2002) and Basingstoke Branch Chairman (1984-88)



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!



WAKE UP TO THE BENEFITS OF THE 'BOIL IN THE BAGS'!

TWO years ago I helped a family member to become a train driver. He passed his assessment with 'A' grades. I also advised him to join ASLEF – which he did.

I know some individuals scoff at those of us who 'come off the street', a term I despise incidentally. Some of us bring useful skills to the railway.

My relation made IRA bombs safe in Ulster and when he left the Army he became a high ranking prison officer. Now, having moved his family 200 miles to take up a train driving job, he is unemployed because of a 'Fail to Call' charge. Six months previously he had a SPAD where after a stressful relocation he misread one yellow for two and went eight metres past a red. If his train had been fitted with ATP, like mine, it would not have happened.

His fate was sealed because his depot was overstaffed. But how can this be allowed to happen? It is redundancy by the back door. It's not a single incident about someone in my family, it is a precedent for us all. 'New broom' managers all swap notes and soon more of us will be affected.

New drivers are not 'off the street' or 'boil in the bags'. They are the future of the railway and the union and we need to look after them just as well as someone with many years service.

Skilful representatives have saved the livelihood of many drivers with worse misdemeanours than this as we see from the gratitude expressed in this very journal.

I brought to this union twelve years experience as a senior road steward and branch secretary with the old TGWU when I was an Oxford bus driver. Along with road steward Dave Millington, who is now a driver at Banbury, I had to deal with the most vile privatisation and deregulation of a nationalised industry.

Now we see the same tricks being brought to the railway – and it will get worse under this government. We need to improve safety standards, protect conditions and defend our jobs or we'll end up with the same farce that bus privatisation was in the 1980s. This resulted in a drop in standards, professional drivers with years of safe driving awards devalued and on the dole, and worse still,

WHAT ASLEF HAS DONE FOR YOU

I HAVE been reading letters in the ASLEF Journal about the continuing difficulties between the RMT and ourselves. I agree with the sentiments expressed concerning dual membership (a bit off!) and the fact that we should avoid personality attacks. Certainly if the RMT finds itself in dispute then nothing should be said that might undermine that action. You would expect the same courtesy yourselves.

There was certainly some envy between other grades as regards how

far we have come in the last 15 years (and we really have done very well) and to be fair there are others who admire us and wish they had done better.

To those within our grade who are not members of ASLEF and other grades who may be envious or just snipe from the sidelines, I say just this – 'Do not ask what our union has done for us – ask what your organisation has done for you!'

John Rimington, retired member, Kings Cross

cowboy bus operators rewarded with a rail franchise!

We need to wake up!

Terry Tuite, Driver, Banbury Depot

FATALITY COMPENSATION

IN January 2010 I was involved in a fatality while driving to London at high speed. A man jumped from a station into the path of my train. It was a very distressing event, as many ASLEF members can testify.

However, what I find totally incredible is that at a later interview with Thompsons Solicitors I was informed that you need to be off the footplate for a minimum of six weeks before you can be considered for criminal injuries compensation, rather than each case been judged on its own merits. I thought this was harsh to say the least.

But what made me think the world has gone truly mad came later. A manager offered me the services of a fellow driver who gave me unofficial counselling. Good as this was, I reckoned I needed more when I found out the company we work for awarded him £1,000 and 5 annual leave days at a plush staff award ceremony and a trip to the national rail staff awards in London for another lavish presentation.

Much as I appreciate us drivers helping each other, I can't help think the irony of an unfair compensation review gets lost in all

this pomp and ceremony.
Driver Anthony Dobson

THANKS TO YOU ALL!

I TOOK early retirement in November last year and I'd like to thank Simon Weller for the retirement certificate he presented to me at Beacon Road Club. Thanks too to the Hither Green Social Club for the flowers they gave to my wife and to Hither Green drivers Andy Eggleson, John Staggs, Andy Fleet and Mark Rowhani for a very nice evening.

All the best to everyone at the depot.

Oh, I almost forgot Paul Stokes. I'll try to catch up with you all soon. I wanted to say much more but tried to keep this letter short.

Ken Beckett, retired driver, Hither Green

DO WE KNOW FRED COLLISON?

TERRY WATERHOUSE, a retired Boiler Instructor and Fireman at Newton Heath shed (26A) Manchester is trying to find Fred Collison who was a Fireman at Newton Heath and then, it is believed transferred to the Southern Region, from where he possibly retired as a Depot Manager.

If you have information about Fred, could you email me at **peterobrien02@yahoo.ie?**

I'll pass any information directly to Mr. Waterhouse, who is my grandfather.
Peter O'Brien

SAFER WITH ASLEF!

May I, through the Journal, express my thanks to all concerned for the thrill of receiving my 50 year ASLEF membership medallion. I feel very proud to have received this honour and would like to offer my most sincere thanks to the Birkenhead branch, and especially to its secretary Bob Jones who I know has worked hard on my behalf to make it happen. (Incidentally I believe Bob is the longest-serving branch secretary in ASLEF). I'd also like to thank District Organiser Colin Smith for making the presentation, and union president Alan Donnelly who spoke on our behalf.

ASLEF represented me on a couple of occasions during my career on the footplate and they were brilliant. No driver is safe without the expertise of ASLEF behind them.

Thank you all so much.

Bill Jones, retired driver, Birkenhead

THANKS TO ASLEF AT SWT

I WOULD like to express my sincere thanks to SWT Company Council representative **Martin Dye** for the fantastic work he did on my behalf recently when I was involved in a

FREE TO CHOOSE OVERTIME?

AFTER many years membership of another union I recently moved to ASLEF – but I'm alarmed at how apathetic some issues are becoming to the unions.

Fairness and equality are what all unions strive for, so why, as a train operator on LUL, are we the only grade within the entire company not allowed

to do voluntary overtime?

We all have bills and debts to pay, so surely if individuals wish to volunteer for overtime to improve their personal situations they should have that choice.

Or is this one form of discrimination the unions don't object to?

Darren Powers, District Line

Clause 9 hearing.

I'd also like to thank the members of Waterloo, Wimbledon Park, Staines and Strawberry Hill depots for their support. Paul Brewster, Waterloo Nine Elms branch

THANKS KEVIN!

I WOULD like to thank Kevin Lindsay for his representation, help, advice and most importantly his support during my recent discipline case. Kevin tore to shreds inaccurate reports and statements from individuals who will remain nameless - but know who they are.

They should be ashamed of themselves!

I would also like to thank Ian Smith, Jim Walsh and John McHugh, all Queen St. Branch, for their invaluable advice and support during this difficult time. Thanks also to all drivers and rail staff who contacted me offering their full support, and a special mention to the managers who gave me immaculate character reference reports. Proof that the company does have some decent managers.

Finally, this difficult period has proved to me that ASLEF is not just a union – it is also a friend when you most need one.

Thanks ASLEF.

Ricky Campbell, Queen Street

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FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain

available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473



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NXEA 2009 STRIKE BADGE commemorating solidarity of ASLEF members. Purchase (£3 plus p&p) from NXEA Branch Secretary or District Council 5 Secretary. Contact M Steele on 07788 153954, 1 Rosecroft, South Wootton, Kings Lynn Norfolk PE30 3WX. Proceeds to District Council 5 Education Fund and ASLEF Fighting Fund.



BRIGHTON ASLEF DRIVERS BADGE. Limited Edition of 300. All profits to fund branch reunions. Available for £10 including p&p (cheques made payable to 'ASLEF Brighton Branch No 35') from Mark Johnson, 51 Drove Road, Portslade, Brighton BN41 2PA or phone 07783 847228.

Eye witness: The Holocaust

There can be no better way of learning about history than by hearing it from those who lived through, and experienced those times. The Holocaust happened over 60 years ago and there are now very few people alive to tell of those dark times in Europe's history. Here Derby Driver **KEVIN THOMPSON talks about a Holocaust awareness event organised by ASLEF Education, part of a series of evening talks on very different subjects ...**

TOWARDS the end of last year my wife and I joined a group of ASLEF members at one of the learning seminars organised by East Midland Trains union learning rep Chris Nutty.

The talk organised for that evening was of particular interest to me, not only as a subject, but because as a member, I had been asked to contribute some ideas for an educational evening, and I had suggested either a visit to the Holocaust Centre near Mansfield, or a speaker to visit us.

I wasn't surprised to learn that Chris was unaware of the centre's existence, as my wife and I only stumbled upon it on a day out. We were so glad we did. Known as Beth Shalom, it is a fascinating place and although a long way from Germany, it gives an incredible insight into what occurred in Europe during the Holocaust.

Chris organised for Bernard Grunberg, a member of the Centre and a Holocaust survivor



Beth Shalom, the House of Peace in the village of Laxton on the edge of Sherwood Forest

to speak at one of our evening meetings. Steve Robinson from the Centre explained how two brothers had visited a Holocaust museum in Israel while on holiday with their parents. It so affected them that they persuaded their parents to put together an exhibition in their own house. It has now grown to be an impressive and peaceful memorial in spite of the suffering it concerns.

SCHOOLBOY WITNESS TO THE RISE OF FASCISM

Steve then introduced Bernard Grunberg who told the story of his involvement in the horror. As a schoolboy he witnessed the changing attitudes towards Jewish communities as the Nazi party came to power. He spoke of how, not only his classmates but also his teachers began to treat him differently, bullying and persecuting him. At one point he found himself to be the only Jewish child in his class, but he wasn't deterred from attending his lessons.

Bernard's father had fought for Germany during the First World War, and yet this didn't stop him from being imprisoned in a concentration camp. So Bernard had to face his ordeal at school without a father figure to turn to. He told us how, being in the right place at the right time, he got the chance to leave Germany. He secured a place at an education



Thousands of children were brought to England on the Kindertransport trains. Bernard's mother had to choose which of her children would escape

centre in Berlin, which taught Jewish people work skills, and while he was there he was offered a place on a special train of two thousand children and adolescents, which was to leave Germany for England – the Kindertransport.

Bernard's mother had to make the agonising decision as to which of her two children should be given this chance, Bernard or his older sister.

A FAMILY MURDERED

Bernard joined the train in Berlin, not knowing that his father had been temporarily released from the camp, and was surprised when his father joined him on the train, and was allowed to travel with him as far as the Dutch border. When his father said goodbye he didn't know it would be the last time he would see any of his family again. He was just 14 years old. Some 40 years later Bernard discovered that his parents and sister were murdered in a concentration camp in Latvia.

Finally Bernard spoke about his life in England, and how he thinks of himself as English. For an 86-year-old he is a truly remarkable man who left us wanting to learn more.

● This event was organised by ASLEF Education with the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre and the Ageis Communities organisation. The centre's aim is to commemorate the victims

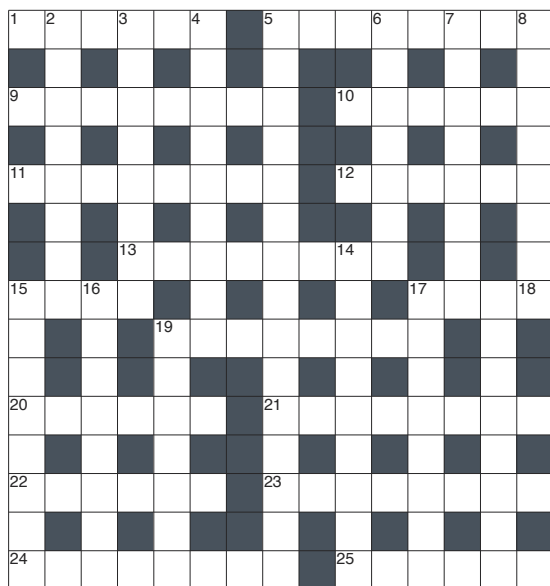


Young Bernard escaped the horrors of Nazi Germany, but his Jewish family were murdered by the fascists

of the Holocaust and to educate a generation of young people about the Holocaust and genocide. To find out more about the centre, or to visit, go to www.bethshalom.com

● Steve Robinson works for Aegis Communities, their work includes raising awareness of atrocities and genocide that are still happening around the world today. They also work within communities and workplaces in the UK to try and stop the rise of racial hatred and prejudiced. For more information about the work of Aegis go to www.aegistrust.org

Prize Crossword No. 58 set by TLC



CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Formerly, Sandwich Islands (6)
 5 Funicular train (5,4)
 9 Excellent concept (4,4)
 10 Flexible (6)
 11 Advance beyond proper limits ((8)
 12 Overseer (6)
 13 Bitterness of temper (8)
 15 Country (4)
 17 Very dry (4)
 19 Regulated (8)
 20 High perfection aimed for (6)
 21 Villain (8)
 22 Odd character (6)
 23 Holds the black or blue

- liquid (8)
 24 Cancellation (8)
 25 Naughty child (6)

CLUES DOWN

- 2 Blessed by the Priest in Church (8)
 3 Senior county councillor (8)
 4 Pigment used for gold and silver polish discovered in drained earth of the Persian Gulf (6,3)
 5 World's busiest rail station (7,8)
 6 Cradlesong (7)
 7 Professional driver (8)

- 8 Came back (8)
 14 Petty fault finder (9)
 15 Shortened lines (8)
 16 Spiritual (8)
 17 Lovers (8)
 18 Egyptian city near the Suez canal (8)
 19 Indisposition (7)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Solution to Crossword No 57 which appeared in the January edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Bernard McCarthy** from **Llandaff**

ACROSS 1 Big Freeze 8 Soapbox Orator 11 Arid 12 Resin 13, Itch 16 Amazons 17 Non Iron 18 Anemone 20 Collect 21 Arch 22, Scram 23 Oven 26 Crystal Palace 27 Dramatist

DOWN 2 Imps 3 Flowers 4 Emotion 5 Zeal 6 Holiday Escort 7 Porter Service 9 Catamaran 10 Think Tank 14 Motor 15 Angle 19 Exclaim 20 Coalpit 24 Tsar 25 Plus

Thanks for all your responses to the 57th ASLEF crossword in the January edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

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